

Dear colleagues, so far and yet so close,

I am an Italian worker and I work making sure online orders of clothes you sew get to consumers. I read about your working conditions in the Clean Clothes Campaign's report "*H&M: fair living wages were promised, poverty wages are the reality*". My story as a worker is not very different from yours and I would like to reach out to you in solidarity.

Since 2016, I have worked in an Italian logistics hub run by XPO, a leading international provider of transportation and logistics services. Our hub supplies 18 countries with H&M products. As a single mother with two children I am used to work hard, even seven days a week when it has been necessary. But I did not expect that working for H&M would totally change my life for the worse. At the huge warehouse where I work, which employed 350 people at that time (mostly women and immigrants), the day shift started at 4.30 a.m. and we did not know when our work would end or when we would be allowed to leave. Sometimes it was 4 hours of work, sometimes 12 in a row, you never knew. A simple text message would be sent the evening before to tell you your working hours for the next day.

In my department we sorted goods that had to be packaged and shipped. I had to stand for hours unloading baskets from a conveyor belt and selecting items. All workers in every department had to work at high speed to meet production levels and not run the risk of being fired,

I soon began to suffer from back pain and I did not have any personal life anymore. No time off, not even for a medical check-up. Not to mention my family, my friends and a bit of leisure time! After a long and hard working day and a 3.00 am start in the morning, I could hardly show up at dinner with my eyes open. I also remember seeing fellow workers faint at work because of the heat. All we got in exchange for our hard work was a wage of about 1,000 euros - which in my country is not even enough to make it through the first half of the month and pay the bills and rent, especially, if like me you were the only earner in a family with children.

When asked about my job, I used to answer; "I thought that slavery had been abolished two centuries ago!" I wondered how in Italy, a country in the European Union, such things could happen without anyone even thinking this was wrong.

One month and a half after entering the warehouse I decided to join an independent trade union; S.I.Cobas. I was aware that I might lose my job, but I felt I had to stand by my fellow workers who had just started to fight for decent working conditions. We organized actions and strike. We also got punished for this with legal complaints and disciplinary letters. Some temporary workers had their contracts stopped because of their union activities.

But we also achieved some good results. Now we have fixed working hours, working shifts based on weekly plans, more humane management relationships, better safety measures in the warehouse, and more. Unfortunately, what is still to be achieved is adequate wages. For example, Saturdays are still considered regular working days and Sundays should be paid at the full overtime premium. We also still need payment for the first three days of sick or accident leave; holidays and leave days, as well as additional bonuses, calculated on a correct basis.

While writing to you I heard that XPO has actually just filed a lawsuit against my trade union and 147 workers. They claim losses in profits and reputation because of our strikes. But what is worse, an announcement was made that 400-450 temporary workers at my warehouse will be dismissed because H&M is opening other new hubs in Europe.

This will not stop us, we have to continue our struggle. We have to stand up for our dignity, for our rights and for a better life in a better world.

So I send all my solidarity - to you, my dear colleagues, so far and yet so close.

Worker H&M logistic hub Stradella - Italy